



# The Ames Intelligencer

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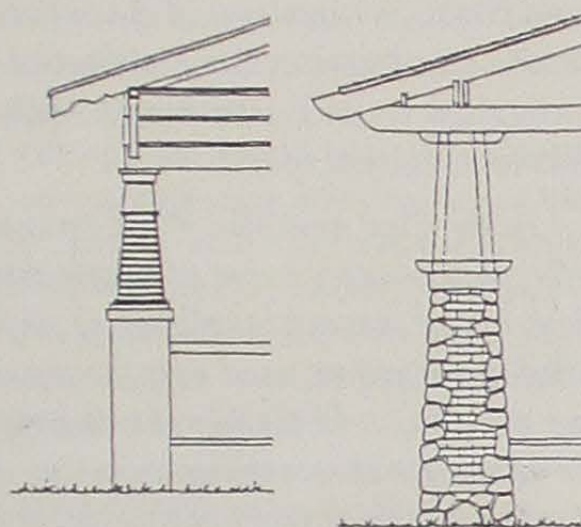
## Part 1: The Bungalow in America

by Gary Griggs, architect with Rudi, Lee, Dreyer in Ames

The American "bungalow" is one of the most familiar housing types that exists in this country. These modest dwellings can be found in the smallest midwestern farming communities as well as the most dense urban centers. While bungalows became a prevalent housing type, they retained their unique individuality through the craft of the designers and builders, varied stylistic interpretations and specific regional construction eccentricities.

Stylistically, there were two major eras of the bungalow's development, the period from about 1900-1917 and that from 1917-1930. These two periods reflected the evolution of the bungalow from the early influence of the California archetypes about 1905, to the commercially developed bungalow suburbs which appeared following W.W.I. The period 1900-1917 was most directly influenced by the California development of the bungalow with its sensitive relationship to the site and use of vernacular materials. These designs are the finest examples of the bungalow type.

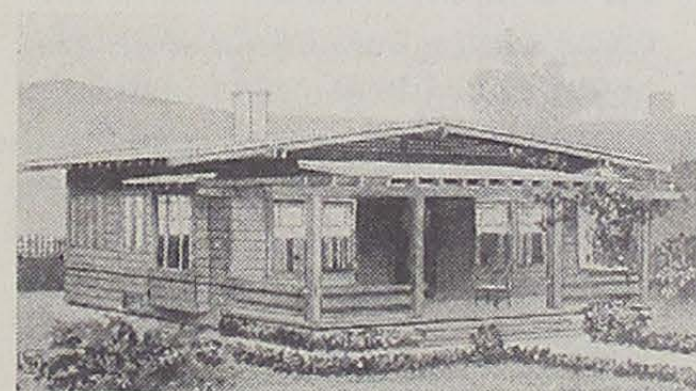
The more common bungalows were built from 1917-1930, and while many fine examples were constructed, they were often mass produced in large suburban developments. The initial concept of this "simple but artistic" home became altered by time and economy, and the concept of the "house in the garden" rarely happened in suburbia.



These later bungalows were a little more spare than the early precedents but they still offered an element of charm with their honest use of materials, the relief offered by deep porches, and the distinctive details of brackets, columns, and gables which personalized each home. As bungalow historian Robert Winter observed, "the common bungalow was not often up to the standards of the best craftsman architects, but it offered a home with style to the American family of moderate means."<sup>1</sup>

The bungalow after which all others were patterned, however, was a product of California. While there were earlier houses in America which were referred to as bungalows, these were usually dwellings like summer cottages, mountain camps, or tent houses - dwellings often responding to the "back-to-nature" Arcadian movement which was so popular at this time.

The California bungalow also responded to this movement, but did so on a daily basis through informal living. California, still the new frontier (though becoming rapidly civilized) beckoned many with its appeal of ample sunshine, mild winters, healthy living and the prospect of financial opportunity. Agriculture was an important factor in the development of California as it provided a livelihood for waves of American immigrants during the 1880's. German, French, Spanish and Mexican settlers often established ranchos, planted orange groves and formed villages, placing all their assets into the land.



M. H. Lazear, in his 1914 article entitled "The Evolution of the Bungalow," noted they would build for themselves small structures which would serve as the barn of the future house. The barn would be functionally constructed and finished on the inside with stalls, mangers, and other typical fittings. The people would occupy a portion of that space, such as the carriage house, and proceed to transform this into their temporary home. In his article, Lazear described the character of the space:



*"[they] generally decorated the carriage house with burlap or 'Old Government Java' coffee bags, held in place by split bamboo strips; and this with a rough fireplace, a few good pieces of furniture, and the shadows of the rafters overhead made a really delightful living room. The barn doors were generally left open, giving an outdoor effect very grateful to the lovers of the sun and space."*<sup>2</sup>

This description could have just as well been referring to the typical interior treatment of a bungalow living room - the burlap, rough fireplace, and rafters overhead all were common features. Even the fact of the barn doors being left open to interact with nature, parallels the porch, the pergola, and the terrace which served to integrate the bungalow into the specific features of its site and the landscape.

Lazear also pointed out that, *"Practically all the early house builders out here were second class carpenters...."*<sup>3</sup> This limited availability of trained builders and the realization that the substantial construction required in the more severe climates was not necessary in California, led to what some people have called the "California shack."

These new dwellings used the principle of the balloon frame, sheathing the exterior in redwood boards and often leaving the interior studs exposed. They began as temporary homes, but were so well suited to the California climate, that they came to exemplify a casual style of life that many people found appealing.

Architectural Historian, William H. Jordy, summarized California's attraction this way:

*"...the equable climate, the lack of fixed tradition, the psychology of vacation, and the sense of California as somehow distinctive and isolated from the rest of the country (truer then than now) encouraged an informality in living patterns which remains both the glory and bane of the area."*<sup>4</sup>

It is not known how these California homes came to be called bungalows, but there is speculation that travelers from other countries noticed the resemblance between these low, widespread, one-story houses, and those of

an East Indian dwelling, or "bangala" as it was called. The "bangala" was familiar to the British, as they lived in such dwellings during their governorship of colonies in India.



However, the majority of these early California "bungalows" or vernacular homes were rarely documented, as they were not considered relevant architecture. There did appear in 1905, however, an article entitled "Some California Bungalows" in the East coast publication of *Architectural Record*, contrasting the California Bungalow to its Eastern and Mid-Western counterparts:

*"...in the East and Mid-West, bungalow refers to a country house of ample dimensions but of somewhat inferior or unfinished construction, used only for the summer months... In California, however, the bungalow is something different. It is a region in which you can live out of doors a greater part of the year - the house therefore can be of relatively inexpensive construction...it has become a commoner type of residence than that of the East [and is] built for permanent occupation. It [therefore] becomes a more complicated and carefully finished product."*<sup>5</sup>

The American Bungalow and its place in the development of the suburban landscape constitutes a phenomenon of twentieth century housing. Within less than a decade of the initial development of the bungalow in America, this reactionary concept of domestic housing was sweeping the country.

The transition from the exuberance and excess of the Victorian era to the "simplicity and harmony" of bungalow dwellings, marked a substantial change in American values.

However, a movement of national scope, growing from isolated developments in southern and central California, could not be realized without the aid of mass communication. California had already established itself

with an aura of mystique. Its sublime landscape, the early gold rush, tales of a Bohemian lifestyle and the glitz of an infant movie industry all promoted a fascination with this newest expansion of the American frontier.

As the bungalow gained exposure in nationally syndicated journals, magazines and books, its popularity seemed to grow overnight.

Popular magazines such as *Ladies Home Journal*, *House Beautiful*, *Keith's Magazine on Home Building*, and *The Craftsman* reached a national audience. Articles hailing the merits of bungalow living were commonplace, with specific bungalow themes such as: "The American Bungalow and Its Significance," "The Psychology of the Bungalow," "What is a Genuine Bungalow?", "The Spirit of the Bungalow," and "Why Bungalows Are So Popular."

## THE DECEMBER 1909 BUNGALOW MAGAZINE



10¢ PER COPY BEEB VOL. I NO. 10  
30 NEW ILLUSTRATIONS BEEB  
READ "THE WILSON BATH ROOM"  
H. I. WILSON PUBLISHER LOS ANGELES

Cover of Henry Wilson's Bungalow Magazine.

This national audience also possessed a new element of social hierarchy - the middle class. During no previous period in American history had so many people acquired the financial means or financing potential to achieve the high level of home ownership seen at this time.

Two of the most significant factors in the development of this housing phenomenon were the free distribution of bungalow pattern books, and the pre-cut housing industry. Not only was this new California housing type alluring, it was readily accessible.



## Scanner Purchased

A Canon scanner was purchased with funds donated by the Story County Sesquicentennial Commission. The scanner has been installed with the Association's computer in the Iowa Room at Ames Public Library. The scanner will be used to publish illustrations in this newsletter and similar needs. In addition, librarian Janet Klaas will use it to copy photographs from the Farwell Brown archive for library patrons. The scanner provides a quick and accurate way to copy the photographs while patrons wait. A small fee is charged for this service.

## Bauge Foundation Completed

The field stone facade for the foundation of the Bauge Home is complete, thanks to volunteer Ken Umbaugh of Ames, who enlisted the aid of Bob Echelberger, Mike and Eva Fisher, Dave Wiese, Jacob and Connie Umbaugh and Rollie and Willie Struss. The stones cover concrete blocks, and will provide a historically accurate look while keeping small animals from entering the home. The Association extends its gratitude to Ken and his recruits.



Before



After

## Collection Policy in Draft Form

The Board is developing a collection policy to guide acquisition of objects for the future museum. A draft of the policy follows; members are encouraged to comment.

The collection will support the educational and program goals of the museum, and support the unique focus of the Ames-Story County story.

### Goals for programs and education:

- ◆ program will create an interactive living/learning atmosphere for persons of all ages that creates new understandings of the past, present and future, or understandings in the context of today's knowledge. Programs will use historical objects, art objects, theater, film, sound - any form of human expression which tells or enhances the story.
- ◆ will operate from a position of strength by telling authentic and distinctive stories which can be told well, will focus on stories the community needs and wants
- ◆ program will be as much about people as about things - will be emotionally engaging with interpretations focused on the human story told with objects - most audiences find "who & why" more interesting than "what & when".
- ◆ program will have a child-focused component, emphasizing the stimulation of inquiry, experience and discovery.
- ◆ program will serve the specific educational goals of the Ames Community School District

### Goals for the historical collections:

- ◆ will include indigenous objects and archives from Ames, Story County and surrounding communities.
- ◆ will include items which emphasize the unique story of Ames and surrounding area: daily and social life, people who lived here, business, culture, government, influences of nature
- ◆ will include a special focus on items which illustrate how education, research, science and technology have influenced the way we live and work
- ◆ will include items which preserve and share the community's memory, which are a statement of culture, which express how we live, what we value, who is included in our story, how we fit in a national and global context.
- ◆ will include objects that are well documented and in good condition which will be professionally handled and stored

in a manner which will preserve them for the long term. Will include extensive oral and written narratives from area residents to enhance and explain the material collection.

## Jensen Chairs Hoggatt School Committee

New Board member Carol Jensen has assumed leadership of the Hoggatt School Committee. She brings a wealth of volunteer experience from Cedar Falls, where she was also involved with a one-room school museum. In October, Carol attended a special workshop and conference for communities operating schoolhouse museums. Conference members toured a number of schools and heard presentations by docents. They also attended sessions on preservation and programming, and were provided with resource information. Carol found the conference very inspiring, and will be seeking additional members for the Hoggatt Committee. If interested call her 233-2431.

## Surveys Provide Information for Museum Planning Committee

Association members received a survey in early October asking for reactions to the ideas developed for a facility which combines a local history museum, a children's museum and an ACTORS theater. Museum planners needed to test their ideas to know the next step in the planning process. Though the initial deadline of October 30 has passed, surveys and comments from members are welcomed. We are very interested in hearing from you whether you would support this concept through dollars or time. Results will be compiled and analyzed in the next month.

The survey questionnaire was also administered by Iowa Field Research, an Ankeny company, to 500 randomly selected people, inside and outside of Ames, who were asked to complete the survey. This allowed us to test the concept with a people who had not previously heard much about it. The response rate was very high.




Lumberyards, millwork shops, and pre-cut manufacturers provided these pattern books in the hope of selling their products. The bungalow and its reputation as a "simple but artistic home for people of modest means," was right on target for the day's changing values.

Bungalow advertising stressed the prudence and artistic merit of their potential buyers, appealing to their intellect and sensitivity with such promotions as "The Bungalowcraft Company" of California and its ads proclaiming itself "the accepted authority of real bungalows - California bungalows - artistic and convenient."

The E.W. Stillwell and Co. urged, "Before you build, it will pay you to send for Stillwell's Bungalow Books...reproduced from original California designs - combining beauty, individuality, comfort, and economy."

JUST A  
HOME



See What Can Be Done With  
**RITE-GRADE  
RED CEDAR SHINGLES**

What could be more beautiful?—Can be stained in lovely dark brown, golden brown, reds, walnuts, grays! What more durable? A roof and wall to last forty years, or a century if you use the right nails. Red Cedar ensures you Nature's best material. RITE-GRADE ensures you man's best manufacture of that material.

Ask Your Dealer for RITE-GRADE  
Shingle Branch, West Coast Lumbermen's Association

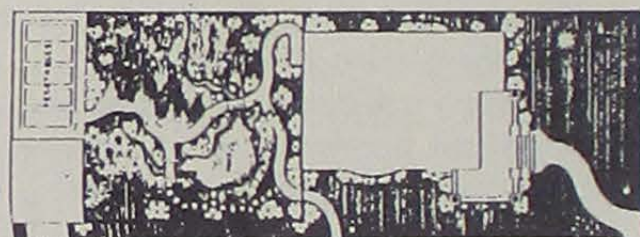
The Southern Cypress Manufacturer's Association's appeal to "All Good Bungalow Folks" interested in their free working plans for a cypress bungalow. There were even designers such as Jud Yoho, "The Bungalow Craftsman," located in the Craftsman Building. Probably the best known proponent of the craft philosophy in dwelling construction was Gustav Stickley through his magazine, *The Craftsman*.

These advertising campaigns were designed for the contemporary market. They were not so much creating a trend as they were responding to

the shift in American housing attitudes: the desire of people to simplify their lifestyle; for women to find more free time to pursue interests outside the home; to incorporate the latest conveniences in this new age of technology; and to reflect the "progressive" living in a new modern era.

The bungalow fulfilled not only this niche in domestic housing, it was also responding to two concurrent movements at the time, the "Arts and Crafts Movement" and the "Back to Nature Movement" or "Arcadian Myth" as it was sometimes called. The bungalow addressed the whims of the nature enthusiasts as it stressed harmony with nature, encouraging the development of the porch, terrace, pergola, and garden, all designed to integrate the house with its site. Nature advocates such as Charles Keeler of Berkeley, California, described the interaction of the house and nature in this way:

*"[the garden is]...the extension of architecture into the domain of life and light...that will bring to our homes and chasten our lives by contact with the purity of the great Earth Mother."*<sup>6</sup>



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**Ames Heritage Association**  
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This individualistic passion for the experience of dwelling, as well as a shift in cultural sensibilities and social mores provided the context for this dwelling type to thrive. Technology, communications, the concept of "modern living" and even the romantic notion of a cottage in the woods, served to create a fascination for this unique housing type - a type which transcends style and is still today providing a quality living experience for millions of people.

## Part 2: in the next Intelligencer The Bungalow in Ames

<sup>1</sup> Winter, Robert. *The California Bungalow*. Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1980.

<sup>2</sup> Lazear, M. H. "The Evolution of the Bungalow." *House Beautiful*, 1914. <sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Jordy, William H., *American Buildings and Their Architects*, Volume 4. New York: Oxford University Press 1972. <sup>5</sup> "Some California Bungalows." *Architectural Record* Sept., 1905. <sup>6</sup> Keeler, Charles Augustus, *The Simple Home*. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, Inc. 1979 (1904 Reprint)

Ames Heritage Association Board: Pres. Kathy Svec; Sec. Kay Beckett; Treas. Bill LaGrange; Rollee & Willie Struss, Peggy Baer, Gary Griggs, Jonathon Brandt, Carol Jensen. Ames Heritage Association is a legally incorporated, not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting interest in state and local history through publications, programs and displays. The Board meets monthly on the 3rd Wed. Sept. - June. The Ames Intelligencer is named after an early Ames newspaper; it is published 3x a year for Association members. Direct comments or questions to the Editor.

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